CCNETWORK
Comprehensive Center Network

PLENARY SESSION

Project Planning

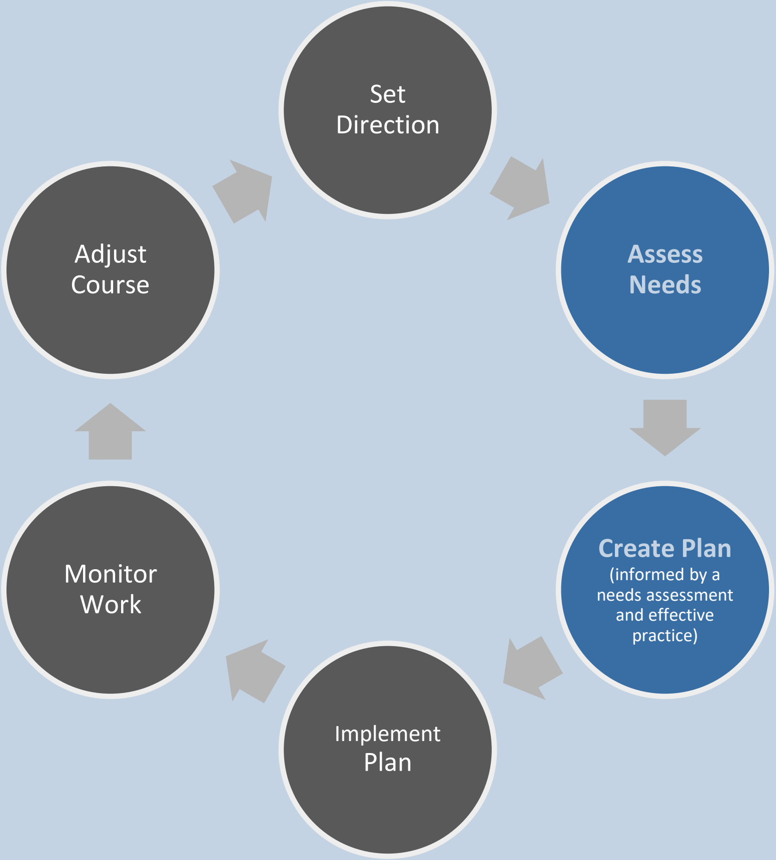
March 9, 2020 I 5:25-6:25pm EST
U.S. Department of Education

Presenters: April Munroe-Phillips and Melly Wilson

Improvement Cycle Theory of Action

Presentation Series:

- Project Planning
- Project Implementation
- Project Evaluation



Session Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will:

- ✓ Understand the key steps in conducting a Needs Assessment
- ✓ Learn best practices in Resource Review/Allocation
- ✓ Understand how to use data and evaluation results to inform project planning
- ✓ Learn how to set metrics and evaluation criteria during the project planning phase
- ✓ Have time (during the session) to ask questions and receive feedback

Conducting an Effective Needs Assessment

- What do we mean by "**needs**" and "**needs assessment**"?
- Why develop a plan for assessing needs? Why develop a plan for that assessment?
- How do you develop a plan for assessing needs?
- Who should be involved in developing a plan for assessing needs?
- When should needs be identified?
- What are the potential root causes of equity and performance gaps?
- How should needs be prioritized?

What do we mean by "needs"?

- "**Needs**" are the gap between what a situation is and what it should be.

- A "**needs assessment**" is a systematic set of procedures that are used to determine needs, examine their nature and causes, and set priorities for future action.

- A needs assessment focuses on the **ends** (i.e. outcomes) to be attained, rather than the **means** (i.e. process).

What is a Comprehensive Needs Assessment?

A Comprehensive Needs Assessment is a systemic process that is used to:

- Determine strengths and weaknesses of a school and/or LEA,
- Understand the context and constraints of the school and/or LEA,
- Perform a root-cause analysis, and
- Develop an improvement plan outlining changes considered most likely to bolster or build on strengths and to remediate weaknesses.

A Needs Assessment should be part of an ongoing performance management cycle that includes both **longer-range performance goals** and **shorter-cycle implementation targets**.

A Needs Assessment is not an isolated tool or practice, rather part of a **continuous improvement process**.

(Using *Needs Assessment for School and District Improvement: A Tactical Guide*. Julie Corbet and Sam Redding, 2017).

Why Conduct a Needs Assessment?

To better understand the environment ("What Is").

To understand stakeholder opinion.

To make decisions about priorities.

To fulfill requirements under Part A of Title I, Part A of Title II, and Title III.

To fulfill requirements under Title IV: Applicants must conduct a comprehensive needs assessment that examines the needs for improvement in three key areas:

- Access to, and opportunities for, a well- rounded education for all students (ESEA, Section 4107)
- School conditions for student learning to create a healthy and safe school environment (ESEA, Section 4108)
- Access to personalized learning experiences supported by technology and professional development for the effective use of data and technology (ESEA, Section 4109)

Stakeholder Consultation

Applicants must engage in consultation with stakeholders (ESEA, Section 4106). Stakeholders **must include**, but are not limited to:

- Parents, teachers, principals, students, school leaders
- Charter school teachers, principals and leaders, when applicable
- Specialized instructional support personnel
- Indian tribes or tribal organizations, when applicable
- Local government representatives
- Others with relevant and demonstrated expertise
- Community-based organizations
- Private school officials (see: *ESEA, Section 8501*)

Who Benefits from Needs Assessment?

- **Key impacted stakeholders** (teachers, students, para-professionals, program managers, principals, families).
- **Service providers** (SEAs, government agencies, **community organizations**, others).
- **Community leaders**.
- And **you**!

A Needs Assessment also...

Allows leadership to determine priorities and allocate resources to activities that will have the greatest impact;

Enables benchmarking and monitoring of implementation and impact; and

Provides direction for programs, projects, and activities;

Creates cohesion through the alignment of goals, strategies, professional development, and desired outcomes;

Assists with continuous improvement activities by helping staff identify change, which practices are working, and the strategies associated with the greatest success.

Dimensions of a Comprehensive Needs Assessment (1 of 5)

- Components/Characteristics
- Focus
- Information Gathering
- Planning Teams
- Use of Results

Dimensions of a Comprehensive Needs Assessment (1 of 5)

Components/Characteristics

- Considers a range of needs and issues (e.g., policy, communication, curriculum and instruction, assessment).
- Includes information gathered from a variety of sources.
- Employs the use of valid and reliable data to the maximum extent possible.
- Meaningfully involves stakeholders representing a range of knowledge, skills, and expertise.
- Results in the development of goal and action plans.
- Used as the basis for resource allocation (e.g., local, federal, grant fund use).
- Includes regular follow-up and evaluation of plans and strategies.

Dimensions of a Comprehensive Needs Assessment (2 of 5)

Focus – Assessment of needs should focus on factors that have the potential to impact student outcomes. At a minimum, needs assessments should address:

- Assessment results, dropout rates, student mobility, attendance rates, graduation rates.
- Curriculum and instruction should also be examined (e.g., standards and assessment frameworks).
- Professional development needs should be assessed (e.g., teacher qualifications, continuous improvement).
- Family and community involvement.
- SEA organization and resource allocation.
- SEA vision, mission, decision-making structures, central office support, and budgetary issues are additional contextual issues to consider.

Dimensions of a Comprehensive Needs Assessment (3 of 5)

Information Gathering

- Determine necessary participants.
- Determine what you want to know.
- Determine who will find the information.
- Identify possible sources of information (e.g., assessment scores, language proficiency ratings, special education data, free lunch participation, grade retention data, school climate reports, attendance records).
- Identify information gathering processes and tools.
- Set limits as to how much data you want to collect.
- Collect and review the data.
- Identify gaps in your knowledge.

Dimensions of a Comprehensive Needs Assessment (4 of 5)

Planning Teams - A formal planning team is a key element of a comprehensive needs assessment.

- Include stakeholders that represent all parts of the system:

Superintendents	School office staff
Central office staff	Parents/guardians
Principals	Community members
Teachers	Students
Para-professionals	

Dimensions of a Comprehensive Needs Assessment (5 of 5)

Use of Results - A formal planning team is a key element of a comprehensive needs assessment.

- Priority setting.
- Development of goals and action plans.
- Resource allocation.

It is important to monitor whether needs, or the gap between what is and what should be, have been impacted. If gaps are not being reduced, evaluation can help determine whether strategies are being executed properly, or whether other strategies should be attempted.

Planning to Assess Needs

Establish a needs assessment committee.

Planning questions to consider (adopted from USDOE non-regulatory guidance):

- Which stakeholders can help identify local needs and/or root causes? How can they be engaged early and in a meaningful way throughout the needs assessment process?
- What data are needed to best understand local needs?
- Do current systems fully capture the needs of the hardest to serve students – including those who might experience adversity that might not come up in a survey or other data tools (e.g., trauma experienced due to homelessness, forced migration, family loss)?
- Are there inequities inherent in the system that are driving some of the local needs?
- How should the identified needs be prioritized when multiple significant needs are identified?

Prepare a management plan.

Developing a Needs Assessment

Key Planning Activities:

- **Identify and collect extant data** (e.g., school and community demographics, formative and summative assessment data, school climate survey results, equipment and supply inventories).
- **Stakeholder identification and segmentation**; secure contact information.
- **Identify methods to solicit stakeholder feedback** (e.g., survey, listening sessions, public forums, interviews, focus groups, assets mapping).
- **Identify the resources** you will need to conduct the needs assessment (e.g., staff time, materials).

Collecting New Information

- **Focus on desired outcomes and gaps** between “what is” and “what should be”
- **Identify the method of collecting information** (e.g., survey, listening session, public forum, interview, focus group)
- **Create data collection instruments** (e.g., survey, structured protocol)
- **Train the people** who will be collecting the information
- **Collect and analyze data**; compile into an easily digestible format
- **Report (and use) findings**
- **Continue to review and collect information** on a regular basis

Common Sources of Data for Comprehensive Needs Assessment

Surveys	Interviews	Focus Groups	Observations	Document Analysis
Program Evaluations	Budgets	Strategic Planning Documents	Environmental Scans	Funding Proposals
Research Reports	Census Data	Suggestion Boxes	PTA Records	

Gathering Extant Data

Some useful sources of extant data include:

- **Student demographics** (e.g., socioeconomic status, language spoken at home).
- **Student achievement data** (e.g., formative and summative data in aggregate and disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, disability status, migrant status, English proficiency, and status as economically disadvantaged).
- **Curriculum & instruction** (e.g., instructional audits, program or project evaluation findings).
- **Professional development** (e.g., professional development offerings, ratings, coherence, alignment).
- **Technology** (e.g., inventory, alignment with SEA vision/mission/goals – link directly to student achievement).
- **Family/Community Involvement Measures** (e.g., volunteering, collaborating).
- **Early childhood assessment data**

Data Collection

Data collection logistics

- After a list of data needed is created, decisions about who, what, when, where, why and how can be made.
- Develop a detailed data collection plan (e.g., stakeholders, measures, timeline).

Collecting valid and reliable data

- Survey development and piloting.
- Development of focus group and interview protocols.
- Collect data from multiple sources.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics

- Clarifying sample size
- Understanding the difference between frequency and means

Content analysis

- Coding textual material
- Counting and weighing
- Identifying trends and drawing conclusions

Prioritizing Needs

What needs are important and feasible?

- Describe the evidence indicating whether identified needs should be priorities.
- Rank and order needs.
- Consider the feasibility of addressing the need. What resources and assets are currently available?
- Identify the possible impact and/or consequences of addressing the need.

Summarize and disseminate findings.

Resource Allocation

Based on the results of the needs assessment, applicants consider SEA mission, vision and priorities as well as applicable federal and local laws and regulations.

SEAs have broad flexibility to use Palau Grantee or Consolidated Grant funds for a variety of supplemental activities to enhance student outcomes and address the opportunity gaps identified through the needs assessment.

- Reminder: SEAs to review allowable and unallowable uses of federal funds.

Applicants to engage stakeholders and revisit Section 8501-8504, regarding equitable participation of private school children and teachers.

Identifying Evidence-Based Practices

Once needs have been identified, SEAs should select relevant evidence-based interventions, when evidence is available, that will have the likelihood of working in the local context.

Questions to consider:

- Are there any evidence-based interventions that would address the identified needs?
- How does the local context, including your SEA's strategic priorities and existing improvement plans, influence which activity may be best suited for your district or school?
- Does the SEA or district have the capacity to implement this activity or intervention (time, money, people)? If not, should an alternative activity be considered?
- How will the selected activity be evaluated and sustained over time?

Why should educators use evidence-based practices?

- An **increased likelihood** of positive child or student outcomes
- **Increased accountability** because there are data to back up the selection of a practice or program, which in turn facilitates support from administrators, parents, and others
- **Less wasted time** and fewer wasted resources because educators start off with an effective practice or program and are not forced to find one that works through trial and error
- An **increased likelihood** of being responsive to learners' needs
- A **greater likelihood** of convincing students to try it because there is evidence that it works

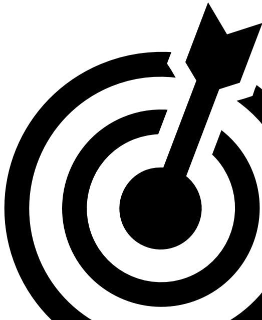
Resources for Researching and Identifying Evidence-Based Practices

- Non-regulatory Guidance: Using ESSA to Strengthen Education Investments This guidance from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) seeks to help SEAs, schools, educators, partner organizations, and other stakeholders understand the four levels of evidence and recommends a step-by-step process for choosing and implementing interventions that improve outcomes for students.
- What Works Clearinghouse The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), an initiative of ED's Institute of Education Sciences (IES), is a helpful resource for locating the evidence on various education interventions.
- Evidence-Based Improvement: A Guide for States to Strengthen Their Frameworks and Supports Aligned to the Evidence Requirements of ESSA This guide from WestEd provides an initial set of tools to help SEAs and schools understand and plan for implementing evidence-based improvement strategies.
- ERIC ERIC is an online library of education research and information, sponsored by the IES.

Setting Metrics & Evaluation Criteria

Setting metrics and evaluation criteria during the project planning phase is essential for monitoring implementation fidelity and impact.

- Developing Theories of Action
- Utilizing Strategic Performance Management (SPM)
  - Identifying measures
  - Identifying data sources
  - Setting quarterly performance targets
  - Identifying persons responsible for project monitoring & data collection and analysis
- Developing Monitoring & Evaluation Instruments and Practices



Resources

- **Resource:** Needs assessment checklist (Handout #1)
- **Resource:** Project review table. (Handout #2)
- **Resource:** Comprehensive Centers and Regional Educational Laboratories

Needs Assessment Checklist (Handout #1)

For your needs assessment, have you:

- ○ Determined the purpose of your needs assessment? Timeline?
- ○ Determined who will develop the needs assessment (e.g., SEA, contractor, combination)?
- ○ Determined what data you need to collect?
- ○ Chosen several key questions that your needs assessment will evaluate?
- ○ Decided on your data collection methods?
- ○ Decided how you will organize your data?
- ○ Contacted your Comprehensive Center and/or Regional Education Laboratory for guidance or other capacity building supports?

Needs Assessment Checklist (Handout #1)

Determining Roles & Responsibilities

Stakeholder Group	Establishment of Design Requirements	Development of Tools and Processes	Data Collection	Analysis	Review	Plan Development
SEA Personnel						
LEA Personnel						
Board of Education						
Families and Community						
School Personnel						
Students						
SEA External Partners						
LEA External Partners						
Other						

Adapted from: *Using Needs Assessment for School and District Improvement: A Tactical Guide*. Julie Corbet and Sam Redding, 2017

Project Review Resource (Handout #2)

Questions to Consider:

- What are the project strengths and challenges?
- What connections can be made between implementation and impact/effectiveness ratings?
- What connections can be made between impact/effectiveness and cost effectiveness?
- What are the implications for the Palau Grant Application or Consolidated Grant Application? What programs should continue? What programs need to be modified, changed, or eliminated? What new programs are needed?

<table>
<tr><td colspan="5">Project:</td><td colspan="8">Purpose:</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Project</td><td colspan="4">Implementation Level</td><td colspan="4">Impact Level</td><td colspan="4">Cost Effectiveness</td></tr>
<tr><td>Developing</td><td>Initial</td><td>Full</td><td>Sustained</td><td>Unknown</td><td>Low</td><td>Moderate</td><td>High</td><td>Unknown</td><td>Low</td><td>Moderate</td><td>High</td></tr>
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<tr><td>Evidence</td><td colspan="12"></td></tr>
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Key Resources

- Gupta, Kavita, Catherine M. Sleezer, and Darlene F Russ-Eft. 2007. *A Practical Guide to Needs Assessment*, Second edition. John Wiley and Sons, Inc. San Francisco.

- Sharma, A., M. Lanum, and Y. Suarez-Balcazar. Summer 2008. *A Community Needs Assessment Guide*, Loyola, University of Chicago. http://www.luc.edu/curl/pdfs/A_Community_Needs_Assessment_Guide_.pdf

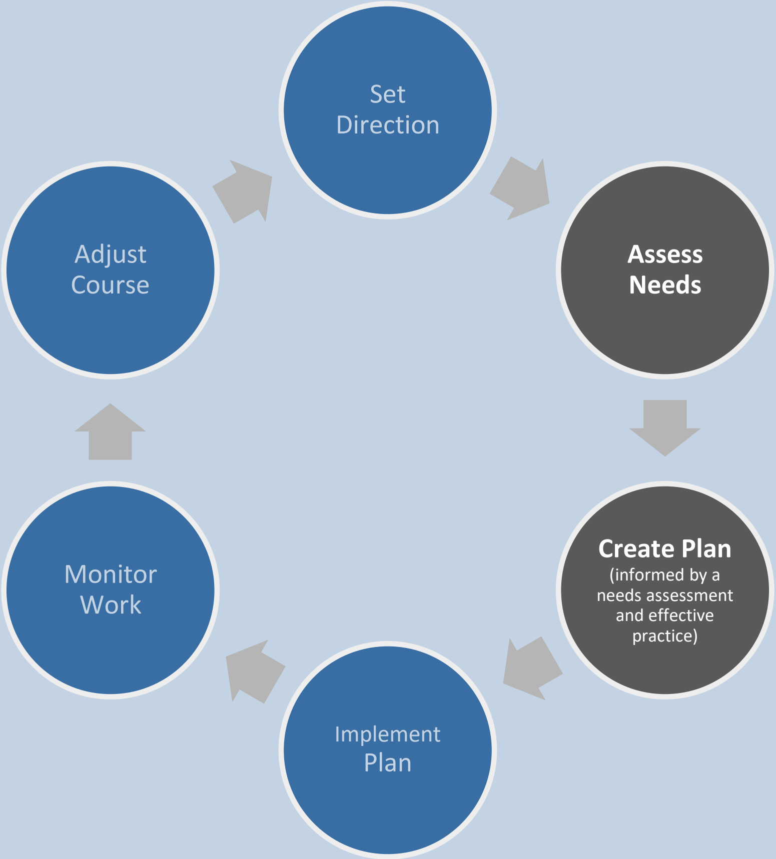
- University of Kansas. 2009. *The Community Tool Box* (CTB). http://ctb.ku.edu

What's Next?

Questions and Answers: Now

Upcoming Presentations:

- **Project Planning**
- **Project Implementation**
- **Project Evaluation**



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Thank You!

Need more information? We are here to help. Contact:

Region 3 Comprehensive Center (U.S. Virgin Islands)
Director: Dr. John Lockwood (JLockwood@ets.org)

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